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XV.—THE *LUDUS COVENTRIAE* AND THE DIGBY MASSACRE

A vague suggestion has been in the air of late that there is a more than casual similarity between the so-called *Ludus Coventriae* and the plays of the Digby Manuscript.¹ The following paper is an attempt to render that suggestion somewhat more concrete and to define the nature of that relation. First, however, it is clearly necessary to deal with the questions of the structure and development of the *Ludus Coventriae* before its external relations may be considered. Miss Swenson's recent careful study is perhaps most valuable in its metrical analysis; but even this must be tested in the light of Miss Block's somewhat more fruitful examination of the manuscript, which in turn neglects the metrical form of the plays.² Miss Swen-

¹ Ward comments on the Digby play thus: "The earlier part of this play has nothing to differentiate it very specially from the *Coventry Plays*" (*History of Dramatic Literature*, London, 1899, I, p. 93); Gregory Smith observes that the Digby *Massacre* is "reminiscent in parts of the Chester Plays, in parts of the Coventry Cycle" (*The Transition Period*, N. Y., 1900, p. 284); Pollard comments on the *LC* as follows: "In language, in meter, in tone, in the elaborate stage directions, in the proclamation of the play by the wandering banner-bearers or *vexillatores*, this cycle appears to bear close affinities to the later miracle plays, such as the Croxton play on the *Sacrement*, and the play of *Mary Magdalen*, and with the early moralities, such as the *Castell of Perseverance*, all of which are of East Midland origin, and to the East Midlands I feel sure that it will eventually be assigned" (*English Miracle Plays*, Oxford, 1909, fifth ed., p. xxxviii). Other comment of the kind will be found in Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, Oxford, 1903, II, pp. 421 ff.; Wells, *Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, New Haven, 1916, p. 575; Dodds, *Mod. Lang. Rev.*, IX, pp. 88 ff.

² E. L. Swenson, "An Inquiry into the Composition and Structure of the *Ludus Coventriae*," *Studies in Lang. and Lit.*, number one,

son is led to believe that the "tumbling" lines mark the chief additions to the cycle; but the changes noted by Miss Block which are indicated by manuscript disturbance go far beyond these in certain respects. We are justified, therefore, in using the evidence from both sources as a basis for a new study, with the hope that further and more specific conclusions may be reached.

The cycle with which we have to deal seems to be unique because its manuscript, subject-matter, and verse-structure show not merely that it has been added to, but that as a whole it is found in the very process of revision.³ Although subsequently used for acting, its revision had not been finished. The chief scribe, in this case at least,

Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1914; K. S. Block, *Mod. Lang. Rev.*, x, pp. 47 ff. I shall not take up Miss Dodds's investigation (*MLR*, ix, pp. 79 ff.), which is satisfactorily reviewed by Professor Craig in relation to Miss Swenson's theories in the volume with her study, pp. 81 ff., and by Miss Block in the article cited in relation to her views. Miss Block unfortunately seems to have neglected Miss Swenson's study. For the sake of clearness in comparisons I have adhered entirely to Miss Swenson's metrical distinctions and terminology, and perhaps unwisely in one respect: namely, in that in most cases I have accepted her classification of the "tumbling" lines and have made them a criterion for the group of plays unrelated to the general prologue. But, as I later point out, long lines of four-stress measure are sometimes difficult to distinguish from some of the tumbling lines so far as meter is concerned, and some of these lines appear in the prologue stanza. On the whole, the stanzaic form has proved to be a surer test, and it will be found that I have kept this in mind.

³The evidence from this cycle should be brought to bear on the problem of revisions in other cycles. Cf. *Mod. Philol.*, xv, p. 556 and n. 2. It should be observed here that so far no proof is established that the prologue and its group are older than the rest of the cycle. The prologue shows signs of adaptation as much as the plays (Chambers, II, p. 419, builds on this fact), although the prologue group may in certain respects seem the more primitive. Cf. Swenson, p. 62.

is also the compiler.⁴ He was adapting a set of plays which had a general prologue to others which had none and which seem not to have belonged to an ordinary cycle. He had finished putting the plays in order and numbering them in sequence; but in the prologue he had corrected only so far as the sixteenth (originally fourteenth) pageant and that not completely. The prologue, as it was originally, is all to be found here, except, perhaps, in the case of the stanzas twelve and thirteen (now fourteen and fifteen) which are quatrains, but which, if additions, must have been substituted before the work of the scribe who revised the numbering or at a different step in the process of adaptation. Furthermore, the stanzas of the "tende pagent," which because of their subject-matter could hardly have been the original tenth in the prologue, show that additions were made before the present corrections. Apparently the scribe copied the prologue, making additions along the way, and then altered the numbering to conform with the present cycle.⁵ From this situation, and from the fact that the scribe of the prologue and most of the plays is also the writer of some of the later additions, it seems practically certain that this compiler effected his work in more than one stage. Therefore the condition of

⁴ Miss Swenson, p. 55, and Miss Block, p. 54, note that in play XXVII, p. 263 (I shall use Halliwell's numbering and pagination for convenience in reference throughout) the scribe changed his mind several times as to what scene to insert. If Miss Block's study of the handwriting is accurate (pp. 54-5), there is another scribe of importance who is responsible for the addition of folios 95, 96, 112, and who added notes in later plays. His work comes after that of the chief compiler: see his additions p. 357 (Miss Block, p. 55).

⁵ Miss Swenson, p. 4, says that the numbering of the plays "is in a hand contemporary with that of the scribe." Is it the work of the later scribe (n. 4 above), whose handwriting "may possibly be of the same general period" (Swenson, p. 39) ?

the manuscript alone may not always reveal what is an addition and what is not.

Although this fact considerably complicates the problem, the evidence of subject-matter and verse structure may be fairly secure. For where the prologue agrees with some of the plays in both matter and form, one may reasonably suppose that they belong together. To associate the prologue with certain plays in this way, or certain plays with certain other plays in a similar way, is not to imply a common authorship necessarily for the group so determined. It is merely to indicate that they belong together, perhaps because of common authorship, or because they belong to the same school or period or region which distinguishes them from some other group. The metrical test has its dangers; but certainly no more than the impressionistic test of style. Although metrical form may be a poor test for authorship, it may give valuable information of a fairly reliable sort as to provenance or period. In substance as well as in meter the prologue agrees with the following plays: I, II (with the addition of the "ballad" meter), XXI, XXII, XLII.⁶ The stanza is non-alliterative, four-stress, tail-rhyme *ababababcedddc*, with sometimes only one or two stresses in the bob-lines. Occasionally a stanza is divided by the speeches. The variations from this norm are rare and trifling in the prologue and the plays mentioned, with hardly more range in the meter than from iambs to anapaests. In other plays: X, XII, and XIX, there are some stanzas in the prologue meter along with a great variety of other meters; but these plays furnish manuscript evidence of having been disturbed. With some justification, therefore, we

⁶I and II are connected in the manuscript, but XXI and XXII are separated by a page and a half blank. Play XXI begins with folio 112 in a different hand.

may take this stanza as characterizing one unit of the plays. Yet in play III the subject-matter agrees with that of the prologue, evidence of manuscript disturbance has not been found, and here the prologue stanza appears with many variations in rhyme. Almost the same condition is found in plays XXXIX and XL.⁷ On the other hand, the stanza is distinguished from certain other forms in the cycle by manuscript evidence, where a change to or from the prologue stanza is accompanied by the fact of inserted leaves. Thus the succession of double quatrains in plays XXV and XXVI, otherwise unbroken, is interrupted by an interpolated leaf containing three prologue stanzas preceded by a quatrain and followed by a double quatrain.⁸ Here the scribe may be using a leaf from an earlier form of his play, but at any rate he has introduced a change. In XXVII again, there is a long interpolation with three prologue stanzas and stanzas of the ballad measure.⁹ One is led to suspect on this account that the prologue meter is found in parts of the cycle which originally do not belong to the rest.

⁷ Hemingway, *Eng. Nativity Plays*, N. Y., 1909, p. xxxiv, thinks that play III is a composite. In XXXIX Miss Swenson finds a discrepancy with the prologue, urging (p. 60) that only one angel appears "whereas the Prologue states that there shall be two," and that at the end of the play Peter makes a speech not mentioned in the prologue. But the latter is comprehensible, since, as Miss Swenson points out, Peter's speech is consistent with the Biblical narrative and is only incidental. Peter's name happens to be omitted in the manuscript, and the speech may not have been assigned to him. And as to the angels, Miss Swenson has overlooked the Latin stage direction calling for "duobis angelis sedentibus in albis." It is true that only one speaks.

⁸ The quatrain may be original here (p. 252) or taken from the stanza on p. 256 (cf. Miss Swenson, p. 53), where, we may note, it is interwoven by rhyme with the preceding as well as the following lines. For the leaf see Miss Block's study, p. 53.

⁹ P. 263. See Swenson, p. 55; Block, p. 54.

Other points to be noted about the prologue stanza are that it does not appear at all in those parts of the cycle denoted by Miss Block as the first and second sections of the Passion, although here the ballad meter (which is associated with it in play II) is used; and that the plays in which it appears are united by other characteristics, such as the Latin stage-directions (here we may include Plays III, XXXIX, and XL). Since it is obvious that if the prologue belonged originally to a separate unit it had its cycle of plays, it seems scarcely hazardous to believe that the plays indicated once belonged to that cycle.

Further support for this view is gained, moreover, from the fact that another variety of meter largely used in the cycle appears from the evidence of manuscript and subject-matter to belong to another source. This is the "tumbling" meter, found in single and double quatrains, and sometimes in a stanza somewhat like that of the prologue. As we have it here, it seldom shows alliteration and then, perhaps, for a special dramatic effect. The appearance is usually marked by a discrepancy in subject-matter between the lines in which it appears and the prologue description of those lines, or by manuscript disturbance. In play IV, the Lameth and Cain episode, a notable addition in subject-matter, uses the meter; and probably the preceding dialogue between the angel and Noah, which is in the same form, belongs to the same group. The form is especially common in the Contemplacio-group, and also in the *Betrothal*, where, although the prologue stanza appears, there is evidence of manuscript disturbance.¹⁰ In play XV, the tumbling meter is used for the cherry tree episode (p. 145), and it appears frequently in the Passion sections (where the parallels to

¹⁰ Swenson, p. 29; Block, p. 51.

the prologue are seriously broken) interrupted by the interpolated leaves already mentioned. In play XXIX there is an inconsistency in speeches of the tumbling meter itself: ¹¹ *Contemplacio* (p. 290) refers to the coming trial but does not mention Herod as taking part. The trial is to be in the hands of Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate. And yet immediately Herod appears, speaking in the same meter in three stanzas, two of which are double quatrains, one of which is somewhat similar to that of the prologue; and he figures in the later play of the trial. Manuscript evidence shows that play XXIX is a composite; ¹² there is no preparation for it in the general prologue; and apparently it was put together after the time of the chief compilation. But since the plays of the tumbling meter clearly do not belong to a harmonious cycle of the sort with which we are familiar, the inconsistency in the material drawn from this group (which has in any case been rearranged and has suffered great changes) does not argue against associating them as coming from a source distinct from that of the prologue group.

The plays with the tumbling meter are otherwise united by their use of English stage-directions, although this is not a steady criterion.¹³ In general they show somewhat

¹¹ Compare, p. 128, the visit which in some speeches is to last three months and in others is finished during the play. This point is discussed below (note 28).

¹² Miss Block, p. 53. Miss Swenson, p. 56, says that the prologue of the doctors is written in a different hand, that it is followed by two blank folios, and that "the hand in which *Contemplacio's* speech is written seems to differ both from that of the usual scribe and also from that of the doctor's prologue."

¹³ The argument from the character of the stage directions is complicated by the fact that Latin was apparently used by the compiler, as in play IV (*Lameth* episode, pp. 44-6), or in plays VIII and IX with English (in the *Contemplacio* group), and on p. 90 (note "*Ysakar*" and cf. "*Abizachar*," p. 134. Miss Swenson, p. 33, sug-

greater skill and a somewhat richer material. And there is some indication that they have used at least one literary source in common.¹⁴

One serious difficulty remains, nevertheless,—namely, that among the stanzas of the tumbling meter appear a few almost like those of the prologue. It happens that there is not merely a shift from one type of stanza to another in plays where there is some evidence of composite origin (as in X, XII, and XVII). But occasionally a form close to that of the prologue stanza appears as part of the tumbling lines. We must note, however, that the form is not strictly that of the prologue. It is composed of one or two quatrains or of a double quatrain (*ababbcbc*) together with the bob wheel.¹⁵ It does appear, except for the tumbling measure within the line, in play III, which otherwise furnishes no reason for not being associated with the prologue. Our difficulty becomes all the greater if we take into account how vague the distinction is between some of the verse characterized as tumbling and the ordinary long four-stress lines, or at least how great the variety of measure is within a single

gests that the former may be scribal). On the other hand, in play XIII (p. 129) an English stage direction appears among the double quatrains which show an inconsistency with the tumbling meter.

¹⁴On the influence of Bonaventura's *Meditationes*, see Block, *MLR*, x, p. 51; also note the use of the *Northern Passion* pointed out by Miss Foster, *The Northern Passion*, London, 1914, p. 100. Miss Foster's "revisers" B and C correspond to the author or school accountable for the tumbling group here. Of her exceptions, which as she thinks are not found in the work of reviser B, none are found in the prologue stanza, and only one (p. 265) is found in the ballad stanza.

¹⁵See pp. 70 ff. (the speech of *Contemplacio*); pp. 78, 146-7, 291, 306, 309. Miss Swenson fails to observe this fact. In plays XXXIX and XL we have the prologue stanza with scheme *ababbcbc*. For this form see Swenson, p. 61.

stanza or neighboring stanzas. So far I have used Miss Swenson's analysis (together with Miss Block's study) and have reached conclusions which, one may note by a consideration of her paper, are in remarkable agreement with those of Miss Swenson, although they are both more definite and a little less cautious than hers. It is now necessary to test her methods more in detail.

We may observe at once that there is a great difference in the metrical form of what may be safely classified as the tumbling measure itself. There are lines with alliteration and others entirely lacking it.¹⁶ There are many stanzas lacking regular alliteration and others without any alliteration at all.¹⁷ Lines are occasionally introduced which show simple iambs:

Now of God and man blyssyd be 3e alle,
Homward a3en now returne 3e,
And in this temple abyde we xalle,
To servyn God in Trinyté.¹⁸

The distinction here from the ordinary four-stress lines is shadowy. Compare, for instance, the following, which have been classified by Miss Swenson as not showing the tumbling measure:

To gete oure levyng withowtyn dwere,
I have sore laboryd ffor the and me.
Husbond, ryght gracyously now come be 3e,
It solacyth me sore sothly to se 3ow in syth.¹⁹

Again, compare the following lines, of which the first four are taken from among lines classified by Miss Swenson as

¹⁶ Cf. p. 70: "This matere here mad is of the modyr of mercy," followed by "How be Joachym and Anne was here concepcion."

¹⁷ P. 71, for example.

¹⁸ P. 74. Miss Swenson, p. 26, says that this play "is written entirely in the tumbling measure."

¹⁹ P. 117. Cf. Swenson, p. 30.

tumbling, the second from stanzas not so classified, and the third from the prologue:

The weys of our lord cast 3ow to aray,
And therin to walk loke 3e be applyande;
And make his pathys as ryth as 3e may,
Kepyng ryth forth, and be not declinande.²⁰

Goo hom, lytyl babe, and sytt on thi moderes lappe,
And put a mokador aforin thi brest;
And pray thi modyr to fede the with the pappe,
Of the for to lerne we desyre not to lest.²¹

In the xxx. pagent thei bete out Crystes blood,
And nayle hym al nakyd upon a rode tre,
Betwen ij. thevys, i-wys they were to wood,
They hyng Cryst Jhesu, gret shame it is to se.²²

One more example will suffice. The first of the following selections presumably shows the tumbling meter, the second simple four-stress:

The pepyl so fast to hym doth falle,
Be prevy menys, as we aspye;
3yf he procede, son sen 3e xalle,
That oure lawys he wyl dystrye.²³

God, that alle thynges dede make of nowth,
And puttyst eche creature to his fenaunce,
Save thyn handwerke that thou hast wrought,
As thou art lord of hiz substauns! ²⁴

The fact is not that the tumbling measure shows such great variety, but that the plays in which the tumbling measure appears show the variety; or, in other words, that the author of any of the plays turned, perhaps unconsciously, from one kind of meter to another according to

²⁰ P. 243. Miss Swenson, p. 54.

²¹ P. 190. Miss Swenson, p. 38. This play shows variety but should be classed with the tumbling group.

²² P. 14.

²³ P. 249.

²⁴ P. 223.

his needs. The longer lines may add dignity as in the speeches of Contemplacio, or pomposity as in the speeches of Herod and Satan. The writer has a range from lines of twelve or more syllables to others of eight; it is we who attempt to classify them. And while Miss Swenson's analysis is generally accurate and exceedingly valuable, it is important to recognize the variety of measure within one stanza, or several, or within the course of a play, of which she has failed to observe the significance. In the light of this, it becomes legitimate to associate whole plays of the four-stress double quatrains with those which show the tumbling lines, and the tumbling measure itself loses its value somewhat as a test of style.

With which group, then, if with either, are the quatrains and double quatrains (*ababbcbc*) of the simple four-stress verse to be associated? The fact that the writer of the tumbling lines could apparently revert at will to the simpler measure²⁵ would seem to show that the quatrains may all belong to him or to writers of his school. A glance at Miss Swenson's table will suffice to reveal that the simpler verse is most often found in plays with the tumbling measure. Manuscript evidence distinguishes the simple double quatrain from the prologue stanza in play X (pp. 93-5).²⁶ In the *Crucifixion* Simon's bearing of the cross and also the Veronica episode are not foretold in the prologue, but they appear in simple quatrains in the plays. On the other hand, play XV, which, except for the cherry-tree episode, is classed with the prologue (or the "older") group by both Miss Swenson and Miss Block, is written in single and double quatrains. The argument for this

²⁵ Notice, for instance, the gradual transition from one variety to another in play XXXVIII, p. 373; also p. 129 (the speech of Contemplacio).

²⁶ See Swenson, p. 29; Block, p. 51.

classification is, however, not entirely persuasive: the lack of the *Contemplacio* prologue and the presence of Latin stage-directions are not insuperable difficulties, since the play is obviously remade. Again, a double quatrain appears with prologue stanzas in an interpolated leaf in play XXVI,²⁷ But here we may note the elaborate English stage-directions, and the initial quatrain identical with the lines on p. 256. Yet there is almost proof positive that the simple quatrains do not all belong to the tumbling lines: on pp. 128-9 there is an inconsistency between the matter of the tumbling lines and that in the simple quatrains;²⁸ and we may remember too the quatrains in the prologue (p. 7). The question is involved, therefore, but one theory that will meet many difficulties is that the simple quatrains belong in part to the group of the tumbling lines and in part to the work of the compiler.²⁹

All our conclusions must be exceedingly tentative, since we have seen that the manuscript, meter, and subject-matter do not mutually support one another in the evidence. It seems probable that the prologue stanzas belong to one group, the tumbling lines to another. In both cases it seems apparent that the plays concerned were acted before the attempt was made to join them in the present

²⁷ Pp. 252-3. Swenson, p. 53; Block, p. 53.

²⁸ This has been referred to above. See Swenson, p. 31. Mary plans to stay three months with Elizabeth, but departs almost immediately. Later, a speech of *Contemplacio* ignores the departure.

²⁹ This theory is harmonious with that of Miss Foster cited above, note 14; see Foster, *Northern Passion*, pp. 98 ff. She, however, gives the tumbling lines to reviser C. It is a question which seems the more reasonable explanation of the error on pp. 128-9: the theory that the compiler made up original lines in part inconsistent with the setting, or that he copied such lines from an older play and let the mistake stand. I am quite willing to believe that the group with the tumbling lines as I have classified it contains sub-groups.

cycle. The ballad meter seems to go with the prologue stanzas, while the simple four-stress quatrains, single and double, come in part from the plays with the tumbling lines and in part from the hand of the chief compiler. Although we cannot go further than this and try to discover how many authors took part in the composition of each group or to trace successive stages in the development of each group, from what evidence we have these classifications seem to stand out as fairly dependable, and all that we need to give them security is external evidence: groups of plays, on the one hand, with the prologue stanza; and on the other, groups with the tumbling lines.

It so happens that these are to be found. It is interesting to observe that the ballad meter and the modified prologue stanza (*ababbcbc* with the bob wheel; *ababbcbccdefffe* — cf. *LC*, play III, p. 35; and other forms) are both used in the *Abraham and Isaac* of the Dublin Manuscript. It has Latin stage-directions. Brotanek long ago showed the futility of relating this play to a Dublin cycle, and pointed out certain affinities with the *Ludus Coventriae* and its N—town.³⁰ His argument, which takes due account of dialect, Waterhouse has found “for the most part convincing.”³¹ And it seems quite possible that this play once belonged in place of V in the present cycle,³² since play V is in the form of the simple four-stress double quatrain and it follows

³⁰ *Anglia*, xxi, pp. 21 ff.

³¹ *EETSSES*, civ, pp. xlv. Note the rhyme i, y = e, ll. 329-333. Cf. *LC*, p. 38, unkende, frende. There are many other examples.

³² In one minor respect, which Miss Swenson has failed to note, play V differs from the description of it in the prologue. The prologue says that the angel “bad Abraham a shep to kyl.” In play V Abraham makes the suggestion himself, but in the Dublin play the angel says “Turn þe & take þat wedyr there,” l. 269, p. 33.

directly in the manuscript (without any break)³³ on the Noah and Lameth, and Noah and the wives, scenes which have been related to the group with tumbling lines.

As an evidence, also, of the existence of a group marked by the prologue meter, we may consider the morality play—the *Castle of Perseverance*. Here again we have the prologue meter, of which the principal variations are: (1) a stanza composed of part of the prologue stanza; (2) the ballad stanza with lines of two stresses.³⁴ And we have the two Vexillatores (whose speeches are in long lines like those in the beginning of the Dublin *Abraham*),³⁵ a constant use of Latin stage directions, and the blank left for the name of the town. With the other group, however, must be associated the presence of Detraccio (Bakbytere) and the four daughters of God,³⁶ but we must note that

³³ Swenson, p. 8. Manuscript evidence as to the sequence of the plays is not, however, very important, since in that respect its method seems haphazard. Note, for instance, the page and a half blank between plays XXI and XXII, both of which are in prologue meter and which were apparently acted together (Swenson, p. 39).

³⁴ Ballad stanzas of this type are found in the *LC Resurrection*, p. 342.

³⁵ Compare also, however, some of the lines in the *LC* prologue; "The soule goth than to the grave, and be ryth gret vertu" (p. 15).

³⁶ Miss Traver finds evidence for a common source but not interrelation: "With the exception of the controversy before God's throne, the *Castell* never runs parallel with the *Salutation*, though both the *Castell* and the *Salutation* present other parallels with the *Charter*," Bryn Mawr College Monographs, *The Four Daughters of God*, Bryn Mawr, 1907, p. 139. Gayley finds the use of the allegory in the *LC* merely a sign "of the literary times," not a "new dramatic invention nor of uncommon historical significance," *Plays of Our Forefathers*, N. Y., 1908, p. 206. The similarity of the *Castell* to the *LC* has been noticed by Chambers, *Med. Stage*, I, p. 155; Dodds, *MLR*, ix, p. 89; and others. We may note in the *Castell* the praise of Mary, ll. 1632, 1710; the list of alliterative names (compare the list in the work of the first scribe in the Croxton *Sacrament*, ll. 15 ff.; and in the ballad stanzas in *LC*, play XIV, pp. 131 ff.); and the early

there seems to be no relation between the corresponding speeches allotted to these characters in the plays concerned.

On the other hand, the identity of a group of plays using the tumbling meter and the quatrains is marked by the appearance of these forms in the Digby *Massacre* ("The Killing of the Children"). Here the tumbling meter, occasionally alliterative, is used in the double quatrain *ababbcbc* (especially in the Poeta and Herod speeches), a form which is not found elsewhere in the cycles beside the *Ludus Coventriae*. While the prologue meter is common enough in the early drama to make us cautious about depending on it as a sole test for relationship, the combination of the tumbling meter and the double

date (see *EETSES*, xci, p. xxiv.). The dialect Dr. Furnivall assigned to Norfolk. It shows the *i, y = e* rhyme (see ll. 15-17-19-21); but the signs of Norfolk he gives as follows: absence of guttural *gh* (also found in *Mankind* and *Wisdom: Mankind*, ll. 445-6; *Wisdom*, ll. 728 ff., although he has failed to make a note of it); use of *w* for *v*; *sch* in *schul* and *schal*, etc., instead of *æ*. These last two characteristics depend much on the scribe, and may so easily have been lost in copying that they are scarcely safe tests for distinguishing *Mankind* and *Wisdom*. The loss of guttural *gh*, as Dr. Furnivall observes (p. xlii), occurred in many other midland and southern counties "early in the fifteenth century." It is found in many places in the *LC* (e.g. "byte," "plyte," "bryth," p. 25). And although the *LC* has *æ* for *sch* regularly, the *sch* may have stood formerly in the prologue group before it was used and in part copied by the present scribe. The Dublin *Abraham* does not show a loss of *gh*, but on that score the brevity of the play makes its evidence of little weight. The appearance of the substantive plural in *-us* may be more important (see *EETSES*, civ, p. xlvii) for west midland influence; but in both plurals the stress falls on the preceding syllables, and the same phenomenon occurs in the *Castell* ("gamys" rhymed with "laudamus," ll. 3646-50) and *Mankind* ("pecuniatus," "patus," "gatus," rhymed, ll. 464-5-6). Cf. *LC*, p. 130. The Dublin play, on the other hand, preserves the *sh* in *shal* and *shuld*.

quatrain is exceedingly rare and with other evidence it affords a powerful argument. What metrical irregularity we have in the Digby play is most closely akin to that in the tumbling lines of the *Ludus Coventriae*.³⁷ The speech, according to Schmidt,³⁸ shows midland characteristics. And the matter fits the sections of tumbling lines in the cycle admirably. The "poeta" corresponding to "Contemplacio," the matter of last year's performance and of this year's is set forth as in the cycle. Also as in the cycle, and not as in the Towneley plays, the York, and the True Coventry plays, in fact anywhere else in English, the *Purification* was originally to be followed by the *Massacre*.³⁹ In the *Ludus Coventriae*, on the other hand,

³⁷ I omit, of course, the Watkyn scene (leaf 147, back). Schmidt, *Die Digby-Spiele*, Berlin, 1884, p. 20, finds parallels to the *LC*. There are schemes, however, which he thinks peculiar to the Digby play: *abbbba* (ll. 345-9, cf. Croxton, *Sacrement*, ll. 198, 247, 292); and the couplet (549-50) at closing scenes. Couplets are found in the *LC*, and even *abbbba* with the preceding quatrains forms what I have called a modified prologue-stanza (see note 15 above). Schmidt, p. 19, has difficulty in scanning the verse, for he considers much of it heroic and yet is bothered by exceptions where only four or three stresses occur. The "tumbling" lines in *LC* would present similar difficulties: cf. p. 191, "How it was wrought, and how long it xal endure" (five stresses?) On the other hand, cf. the Digby play: p. 2, l. 43, "Of ij yeeres age & within, sparyng neither bonde nor ffree"; or p. 23, l. 562, "The disputacion of the doctours to shew in your presens." With these two lines, compare again the line from *LC* (p. 161): "I am the comelyeste kynge clad in gleteringe golde." The Digby play has also the simple four stress: p. 21, l. 520, "In this tempill with hert and mende." For three stresses cf. these lines in the *LC*, p. 147: "A! swete wyff, what xal we do? Wher xal we logge this nyght?"

³⁸ Pp. 18-9. He notes the *i, y = e* rhyme, and the loss of guttural *gh*.

³⁹ In the York the *Purif.* is followed by the *Flight*. See L. T. Smith, *York Plays*, p. 433, n. 1. Cf. *The Massacre*, ll. 30 ff.:

And to shew you of our ladies purification
that she made in the temple as the vsage was than.

while the *Purification* does not show the prologue stanza, it does show a stanza which is almost unique in the cycle,⁴⁰ the play seems to be a later addition, and the *Slaughter of the Innocents* is in the prologue stanza. If, therefore, we insert the Digby play at this point in place of these two, it fits perfectly. The matter which it promises next year, "the disputacion of the doctours," follows in the same meter in the next play; the play which precedes (XVII) has been tampered with, but preserves also some of the same meter.⁴¹ Furthermore, like the devotion of the *LC* to Mary, the Digby play is held in honour of the feast of St. Anna⁴² and the dedicatory lines celebrate Mary.

The Digby Manuscript has some association with Bury St. Edmunds.⁴³ Curiously enough so have the Croxton

And after that shall herowd haue tydynges
how the three kynges be goon hoom another way, etc.

⁴⁰ A few stanzas of the same type appear in play XII, a composite. See Swenson, p. 34.

⁴¹ For the play which follows, see Swenson, pp. 38 and 65, who classifies it as lacking in the tumbling measure. As I have said, this measure is a matter of dispute: cf., p. 190, "Goo hom, lytyl babe, and sytt on thi moderes lappe," and the Digby play (*EETSES*, lxx), p. 3, "Aboue all kynges vnder the Clowdys Cristall." For the same meter in the *LC* play which precedes, see p. 161.

⁴² See ll. 1 ff. It may be that this part of the *LC* hails originally from Lincoln. Cf. Craig, [*Minnesota*] *Studies*, No. 1, pp. 75 f. The prophet play (VII), on which his evidence is in part based, seems to be of the tumbling group or rather, as it is better to call it here, the group of plays with double quatrains (here simple four stress). The prologue group would hardly do for St. Anne's day, since it is prepared for "Sunday next." Craig's attempt to find proof that the cycle as a whole belongs to Lincoln on the ground that Lincoln plays "seem to have been processional, and yet to have been acted, at least in part, upon a fixed stage" neglects the fact that the cycle is not a finished composition, that the fixed stations may belong to one group and the movable pageants to another.

⁴³ See "Myles Blomefylde," Schmidt, p. 6.

Sacrement and the Macro *Mankind*,⁴⁴ which also show a use of the double quatrains and a variation between the simple four-stress and the tumbling lines. But the Croxton *Sacrement*, like the *Abraham*, appears in a Dublin Manuscript,⁴⁵ and has speeches by Vexillatores and sections in the ballad meter. Yet there is some evidence, not before noted apparently, that these characteristics, which would ally the play to the prologue group, are additions. According to Waterhouse,⁴⁶ the "banns" and ll. 1-246, 405-566, are written by one hand different from that of the rest of the play. These sections include all of the ballad lines. And it seems to have escaped critics that ll. 37-52 of the banns are almost identical with ll. 852-67 (p. 85), suggesting perhaps that there has been a revision for the sake of creating a prologue. And we may observe that otherwise the lines show great similarity to those of the tumbling group: the *ababbcbccdc* scheme appears,⁴⁷ and the alternation of quatrains and double quatrains.⁴⁸ Its dialect is midland, and the stage directions are English.

"See allusions to Tolokote and Babwelle Mylle near Bury. Cf. Waterhouse, *EETSES*, civ, p. lxiv. Macro was son of a resident of Bury; see *EETSES*, xci, pp. ix and xxx, and p. 11, l. 267, (the "comyn tapster of Bury"). For the dialect of the *Sacrement* see the i, y = e rhyme, ll. 640-2. There is no evidence for the loss of guttural *gh*, but the confusion of u, w, and v, occurs (see p. lvi). In the case of *Mankind*, see the rhyme ll. 270-2, and the loss of *gh* (note 36 above). *Wisdom*, which has no reference to Bury, may be also included, however, as offering the same problems as *Mankind*. The resemblance of the stage directions to those in *LC* is noted by the editor, *EETSES*, xci, p. xx.

⁴⁴ Waterhouse, p. lv.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. lv.

⁴⁶ P. 58, ll. 37-48; cf. *LC*, pp. 256, 261.

⁴⁷ P. 66; cf. *LC*, p. 217 and elsewhere. It has part of a prologue stanza, p. 66; cf. *LC*, p. 309. It has other irregularities: *abbb*a (see note 37 above); and *ababb*. Cf. *ababbaba* as on p. 81, ll. 746-53, with Digby and with *LC* (e.g. p. 305). See Schmidt, pp. 20-21.

Mankind is also midland, has elaborate English stage-directions, and perplexingly combines the double quatrain and the ballad stanza.⁴⁹ Perhaps, therefore, it is wrong to associate the ballad stanza only with the prologue group. But Pollard's opinion that the play is late⁵⁰ may suggest that this too has been reworked⁵¹ like the Croxton play, or that they both belong to a period in which the writers reverted to whatever stanza pleased them. They are a warning, however, which may be paralleled elsewhere, against a too rigid adherence to our scheme.

It must be confessed, therefore, that without doubt the problem of the development of the *Ludus Coventriae* is either much simpler than we have supposed (but the evidence from the manuscript and prologue militate against this), or it is so much more complex that we shall hardly arrive at the true analysis in all its details. But we can

⁴⁹ Most of the ballad stanzas are given to the Vices. It is interesting to note that the Tutivillus lines of the Towneley *Juditium* are in the same measure.

⁵⁰ *EETSES*, xci, pp. xi, xix.

⁵¹ Evidences of reworking appear most plainly in the Digby play in the stanzas of rhyme-royal on leaf 147. A further connection with Bury St. Edmunds is found in the fact that Lydgate, whose interest in the drama expressed itself in pageantry and mumming, wrote frequently in rhyme-royal and in the double quatrain. His known verse shows such regularity that Dr. MacCracken has denied to him certain dramatic pieces in the double quatrain with which we are here familiar: e.g., the pageant for the return of Henry V from Agincourt, see Withington, *English Pageantry*, Cambridge, 1918, I, pp. 132 ff., and *ASNS*, cxxvi, p. 100, n. 1; and the entry of Queen Margaret in 1445, Withington, I, 148, and *Mod. Philol.*, xiii, p. 55. Hemingway (*Nativity Plays*, p. xxxvii) long ago suggested Lydgate as the author of the *LC*; and although it is unnecessary to ascribe the plays to him personally, the tumbling group may indeed show the work of the school which he once led. And it would be convenient to account for the "theological amplifications," so often noticed (cf. Foster, *Northern Passion*, p. 98), by the influence of Bury.

make progress in the right direction and indicate generally some of the steps in the formation of the cycle. There are complications within the groups that we have marked off: metrically the Dublin *Abraham* seems closer to the *Assumption* (in so far as the form of its prologue stanza is concerned) than to the prologue, and a difference in quality may easily be detected in subject-matter as well as in verse in the plays of each group. But if I have succeeded in making my point clear, the evidence, which is drawn perhaps most vividly from the Digby *Massacre*, shows that in forming this cycle two great groups of plays, distinct from each other in meter as well as in method of performance, were utilized by a scribe who worked in several stages and may have used either group for his basis. Several scribes may have participated; we cannot approach the authorship more nearly than this. And the plays may have originated in one locality; or the prologue group may have come from Northampton, Norwich, or Newcastle, and the tumbling group from Bury St. Edmunds or Lincoln. These are lines for future investigation, for which I hope I have furnished some hints. At any rate, the necessity of the closer association of this cycle with the Digby plays, the Macro plays, the Dublin *Abraham*, and the Croxton *Sacrement*, seems clear, and it sheds light on the dramatic activity of the midland district.

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